

ELEMENTARY  
COUNTERPOINT

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"The Basis of Harmony"

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9 - PPE  
PRICE  
\$2.00  
net

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GORDON V. THOMPSON LIMITED  
TORONTO CANADA  
IN U.S.A.  
ROBBINS MUSIC CORP.

65/55

## Introduction

Counterpoint is the art of writing two or more good tunes which sound well when sung or played together. This book shows how to do this with not more than three melodies.

The student of counterpoint should have a good knowledge of elementary harmony, including the treatment of triads and their inversions, chords of the seventh and elementary modulation. For three-part counterpoint it is helpful to know some of the more frequently used chromatic chords and suspensions.

Symbols, figures and other signs used in this book for harmonic designation are these:

Roman numerals I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII represent the successive notes of any ascending major or minor scale. When used with small letters or Arabic figures they indicate the roots of the chords symbolized.

The letters *a*, *b* and *c* following Roman numerals show the position of chords; for example, Ia is the tonic triad in root position; IIb is the supertonic triad in first inversion; Vc is the dominant triad in second inversion, etc.

The figure 7 is added to the root for chords of the seventh, and the letter *d* for their third inversion, so that V7a is the dominant seventh chord in root position; II7d is the third inversion of the supertonic seventh, etc.

These signs are convenient to use for intervals:  
P for perfect. + for major. - for minor. o for diminished. x for augmented.

When the circle o follows the figure 7 it means that the seventh is diminished, therefore VII7o is the diminished seventh chord built on the leading note.

The Figured Bass: Figures below bass notes indicate the distance of the upper notes of the chord above the bass. In two-part writing, chords

are only suggested, but in three part harmony, (and in four parts too) these figures have special meanings:

5 or no figures .....a triad in root position.

3

6 or 6 .....a triad in first inversion

3

6 .....a triad in second inversion

4

7 or 7 6 4 4

3, 5, 3, 2, ..... chords of the seventh and their three inversions.

Sometimes the full figuring is required when one of the notes is to be altered by an accidental:

6	7
4	# 5
3	# 3

An accidental placed alone below a bass note means that the third above the bass is to be altered according to that accidental. Other inflected notes have the accidental placed before the figure, such as #4 b7 etc.

Suspensions are figured horizontally: 9 8, 7 8, 7 6, 4 3.

A dash below a bass note indicates that the upper notes are to be held while the bass moves. If the dash is preceded by a figure, the note represented by that figure remains while the bass moves, or sometimes while another note moves. It is never difficult to see which of these meanings is expected.

The student should be familiar with the various good chord progressions, resolutions of discords and the proper place for suspensions.

This symbol ♯ is called a *direct*. It indicates the position of the next note to be written, but leaves the time value to the student.



## CHAPTER I

# TWO-PART COUNTERPOINT: NOTE AGAINST NOTE.

1. The first step in two-part writing is to add a simple tune above or below a given part known as the Canto Fermo, or fixed song. This term is usually abbreviated to Canto, or C.F. It may be written for any voice or instrument. The beginner is advised to write counterpoint for voices before attempting instrumental work. Vocal parts should be kept within the range of each voice:



2. Good counterpoint should have a sound harmonic basis. The available chords for the present are triads with their first inversions, and occasionally a dominant or a secondary seventh. The diminished seventh may be used if the seventh resolves by falling a semitone while the leading note remains.

Avoid diminished and augmented triads in their root position, also augmented triads in first inversion. These are the prohibited chords: VIIa in all keys. IIa, IIIa and IIIb in minor keys, except when the melodic minor scale is used.

The third of each chord should be present where possible, therefore most of the intervals between the C.F. and the added part will be thirds and sixths. An occasional seventh, or its inversion the second, may be used if it resolves by falling a step.

The fifth and octave are rarely used, but sometimes are necessary to improve a tune. They should be approached by notes which move in the opposite direction to each other. Here are examples of the use of these harmonic intervals:



3. Since three notes are required for a triad, two notes can only suggest the harmony. Sometimes one part, or voice, may have a note long enough to allow the other voice to sing the remaining two notes of the chord in succession; or, one part may sing two notes which represent two different chords, while the other part holds the note which is common to both chords:



### 4. Motion between the two parts:

Movement of one part or voice in relation to the other is known as motion. There are three kinds of motion:

Similar motion, when both parts move in the same direction.

Contrary motion, when both parts move in the opposite direction.

Oblique motion, when one part moves while the other remains stationary.



### 5. Melodic movement of the counterpoint:

Any interval may be used melodically except the major seventh and all augmented intervals. These are not easy to sing, and prevent the writing of a flowing, or florid melody.

If a note moves to the next note in the scale, up or down, it moves *conjunctly*, or by step. Otherwise it moves *disjunctly*, or by leap. A good tune contains a mixture of steps and leaps.

Three leaps should not be made in the same direction, unless they form a broken chord of the seventh.

Chromatic moves are sometimes used when a sudden modulation or transition is desired.

Repeated notes should be used sparingly in two-part work.



Leaps of a diminished fifth, sixth, seventh or octave, are better approached and left by notes which lie *inside* such intervals:



6. The C.F. is sometimes divisible into two or more phrases, each of which should have some sort of cadential progression. In two parts, this can be done by inverting one of the cadence chords: perfect cadences may use Va to Ib, or Vb to Ia.

A good imperfect cadence is IIb to Va, or any other chord which does not contain the leading note, moving to Va.

The middle cadence may be imperfect, or deceptive, or it may be a perfect cadence in another key (modulation):

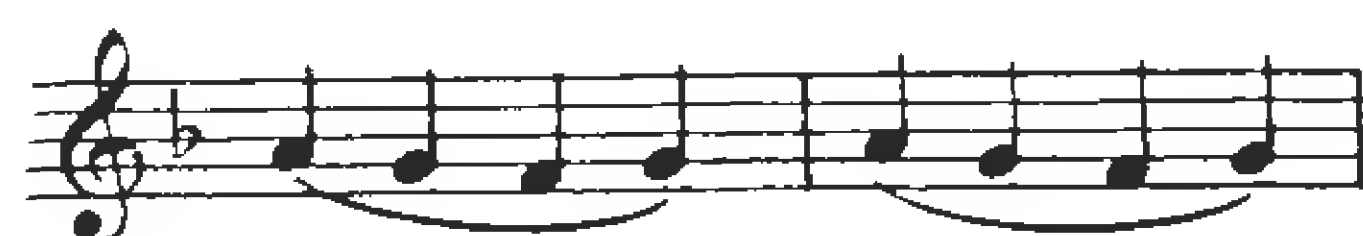


7. To avoid monotony of rhythm make use of the device shown in paragraph 3. Sometimes the added part may be delayed for a bar, then start with an *imitation* of the opening notes of the C.F.; or the added part may reproduce a short pattern of its own at another pitch. This is known as *sequence*:



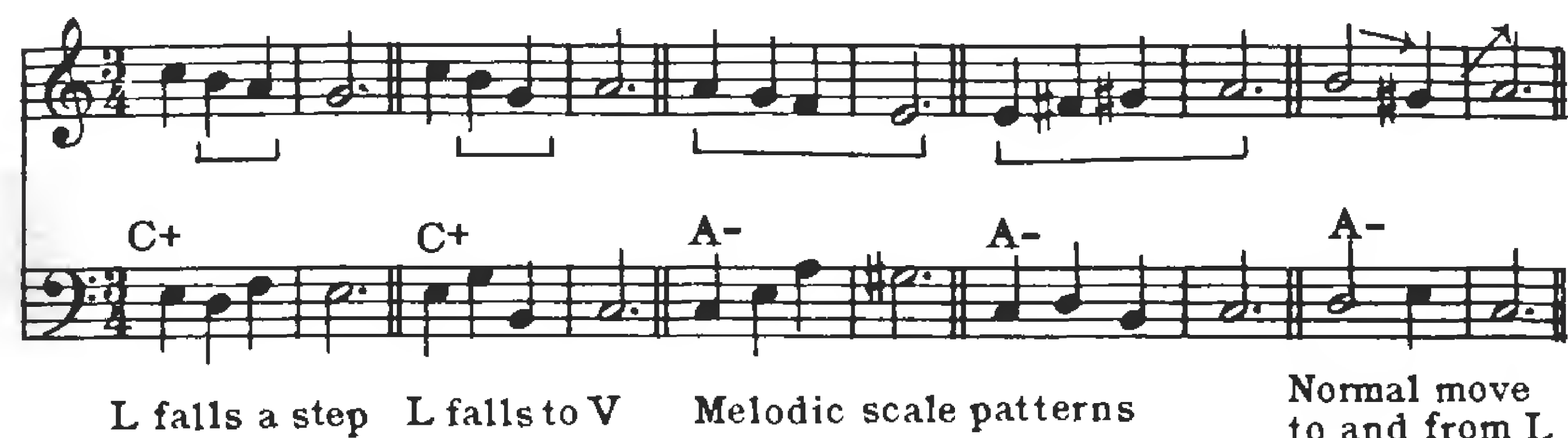
8. Additional suggestions:

Avoid repeating a short melodic pattern at the same pitch. This is *melodic tautology*:



Make the leading note behave itself. It usually wants to rise, but it may fall to the dominant, or it may go down the scale by step. If it does this in a minor key, the melodic scale should be used. When it falls to the dominant by leap it is better that the dominant should rise afterwards.

The leading note is usually preceded by a higher note, but it may be approached from below. If such an approach is made in the minor key, the melodic scale should be used. Do not double the leading note:



Repeated notes are rare, but if a note is repeated over the bar line, it is better to become a seventh, or its inversion a second, and should fall one step to resolve:



It is not necessary to insist on the seventh of the dominant chord being present when modulating if there is a note characteristic of the new key present:









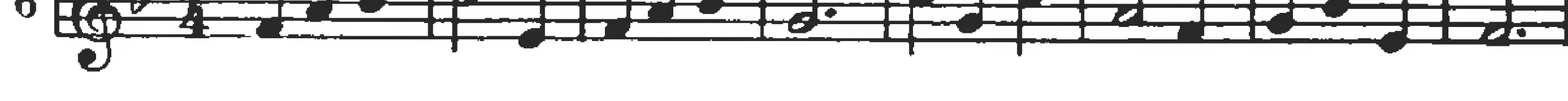



## EXERCISES TO CHAPTER I

Aim for neatness and accuracy. Turn the stems in the proper direction.

A. To the following C.F.s add a soprano. Long notes *may* have two notes used consecutively by the other part and vice versa.

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4 
- 5 
- 6 
- 7 
- 8 
- 9 
- 10 

B. To the following C.F.s add a bass, using note against note, with an occasional long note against two successive shorter notes.

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4 
- 5 
- 6 
- 7 
- 8 
- 9 
- 10 



## TWO-PART COUNTERPOINT: UNESSENTIAL NOTES

## 2. Passing Notes:

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, some marked with an 'x'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes, also marked with an 'x'. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The system is labeled 'Ib' at the end.

(a) In consecutive thirds or sixths.

(b) Through an octave by contrary motion.



If VI or VII of the scale is a note of the chord, it should belong to the *harmonic* scale.

If these notes are passing notes they may be altered by the addition of an accidental to VI, or the omission of the accidental from VII, as required to avoid an -x2.

Upper auxiliary notes are always diatonic, that is, they belong to the scale of the key in which the music is written.

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains six measures of music: a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains six measures: a quarter note G3, a quarter note F3, a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, and a quarter note B2. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

The first system of musical notation for 'The Bird Song' consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains four measures of music: a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains four measures: a quarter note G3, an eighth note F#3, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. The two staves are connected by a brace on the left.



4. In adding a part above or below a C.F., do not fill up every available interval of a third with a passing note, and use auxiliary notes sparingly. Vary the rhythm of the two parts so that when one part has a long note, the other has some movement. Another note of the chord is often used on the unaccented beat. Such notes, which were used in the previous chapter are known as bye-tones. By breaking a chord into other positions there is an opportunity to insert passing notes and make a smoothly flowing melody:



5. **Delayed entries** are good, if they produce imitation of the opening of the C.F. Strict imitation is not always possible and is never a virtue. Free imitation of the tune or even the rhythm, is more desirable. Sometimes it is possible to invent a short melodic figure which may be reproduced in sequence in the same voice:



#### 6. Rests:

When a C.F. is long, both it and the added part may have occasional rests. Sometimes a phrase ends with a rest. It is important that rests should never be inserted at random, or be used in an attempt to correct a harmonic error. Two general principles will guide the student in the proper use of rests:

(a) If a rest is used on a weak beat after an accented note, always consider the note as being in effect during the rest.

(b) If the rest occurs on the accented beat followed by a note on the weak beat or part of a beat, consider the note as being written on the accent, and delayed:



7. It is not imperative to move over every bar-line by step, but always helpful in the making of a good tune to do so.

Try to give the counterpoint some sort of design instead of moving aimlessly about.

Use a melodic or rhythmic figure several times in the added part to give unity.

If the C.F. is long enough, and suggests it, try to make at least one modulation to a related key. The dominant key or its relative minor are the best keys to visit at the middle cadence. After that one or two transitions are sometimes possible.

Do not change chords too frequently. One change of harmony in a bar is usually sufficient. Never change a chord on an eighth note if it can be avoided. An eighth note off the beat is either an unessential note or another note of the previous chord:



Passing notes may decorate a cadence effectively:

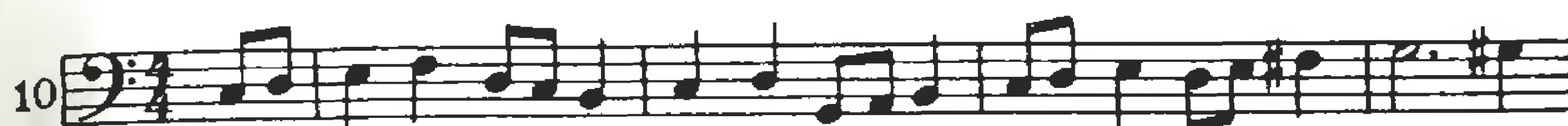
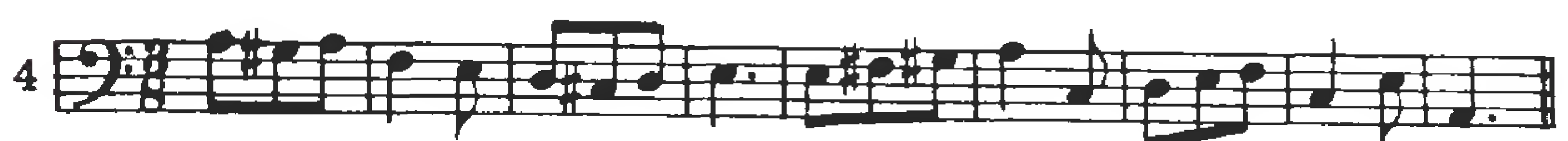
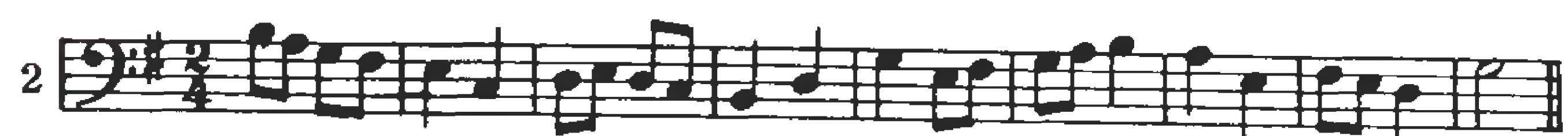
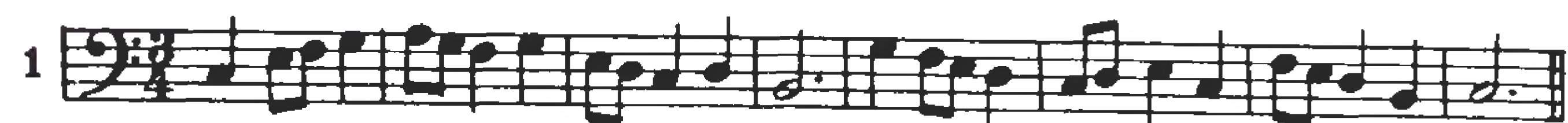




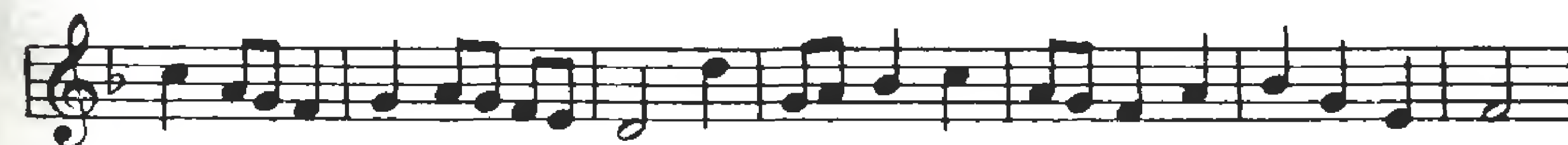
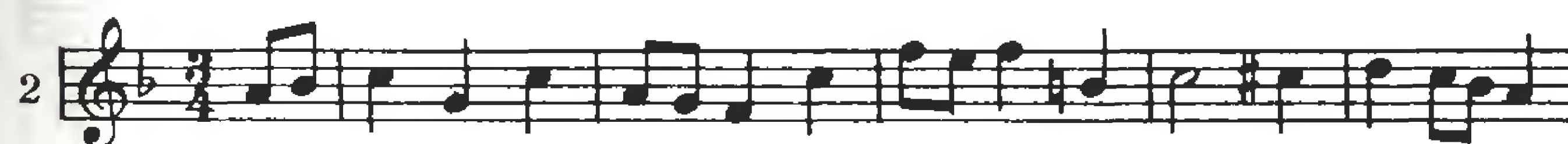
## EXERCISES TO CHAPTER II

Aim for neatness and accuracy. Watch the position of stems when eighth notes are joined. This is governed by the note farthest from the middle line.

A. Add a soprano to each of these C.F.s. Contrast the rhythm as much as possible.



B. Add a bass to these melodies, contrasting the rhythm of the two parts:





4 

5 

6 

7 

8 

9 

10 

## CHAPTER III

## TWO-PART COUNTERPOINT: THREE AND FOUR NOTES TO ONE

1. The same harmonic basis, and the treatment of passing and auxiliary notes as used in the last chapter, is necessary for the writing of more elaborate melodies. In addition to the unessential notes already learned, another type of ornamental notes should now be introduced: *changing notes*.

The changing note pattern is formed by leaping between the upper and lower auxiliary notes before returning to the harmony note. This figure may easily become a mannerism in counterpoint if it is not used with discretion. It is often called the refuge of the destitute, who can find no other way of filling up the space between two harmony notes.

The simple changing note figures are the following:



Va Ib IIb Ib

2. The changing note pattern may be modified.

(a) The harmony note may fall to another note a third lower, with the lower auxiliary note of each intervening.

(b) The harmony note may rise a third to another such note with the upper auxiliary note of each between them.

(c) In triplet beats the initial note is omitted, so that the idiom starts with either the upper or lower auxiliary note.

(d) In all these patterns the lower auxiliary note is more effective when it is a semitone below the harmony note. An exception is made when the changing note pattern is followed by the leap of a third downwards:



Ia - IVa Va Ib Va Ib Va VIa Vb Ia



### 3. Three notes against one:

The beats, or divisions of bars, should be triplets and the time signatures  $3/8$ ,  $6/8$ ,  $9/8$  or  $12/8$ .

A beat may contain one of these arrangements of notes:

(a) A harmony note, followed by a passing or auxiliary note, then another harmony note.

(b) A harmony note followed by two successive passing notes between the fifth and the root of chords Ia, Ib, IVa or IVb.

(c) Two successive harmony notes followed by a passing or auxiliary note.

(d) A broken chord figure, preferably followed by stepwise movement in the opposite direction.

(e) A pair of changing notes followed by the harmony note which they decorate.



### 4. Four notes against one:

(a) The first note of the group should be a harmony note.

(b) The remaining three notes may be passing, auxiliary or changing notes, with another harmony note.

(c) A broken chord pattern is possible if it produces a chord of the seventh and returns in stepwise movement.

Consecutive fifths and octaves are not allowed. There must be one change of harmony between them, with one exception: if one of the fifths is a passing note, one note between fifths is sufficient:



5. A few exercises are given at the end of this chapter requiring the addition of a steadily moving melody in three notes to one, or four notes to one, according to the length of the beats. These exercises help to establish a technique, but it is rare that melodies move along in as uniform a style as this except in toccatas and other instrumental works of a similar type. To make a tune interesting, it is better to write counterpoint with some variety of rhythm. In triplet beats, it lends variety to use a quarter note followed by an eighth occasionally. In four notes to one, monotony may be broken by using two notes to one as explained in the last chapter:



6. In minor keys, the interval of an augmented second should be avoided in vocal writing.

The rules for this problem are given in Chapter II, paragraph 2.





## EXERCISES TO CHAPTER III

Aim for neatness and accuracy. Watch the time values and the stems of notes.

A. Add a soprano to each of these C.F.s, using three notes to one. Occasional rests may be used.

1

2

3

4

5

B. Add a soprano to each of these C.F.s, using four notes to one. Rests may be used.

Handwritten musical notation for five staves, numbered 1 to 5. Each staff is in bass clef with a 2/2 time signature. The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1: C<sub>2</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>
- Staff 2: C<sub>2</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>
- Staff 3: C<sub>2</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>
- Staff 4: C<sub>2</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>
- Staff 5: C<sub>2</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>

C. Add a soprano to each of these C.F.s, using four notes to one:

[illegible]

D. Add a bass to these C.F.s, using three notes to a beat, with an occasional longer note.

The image displays five staves of musical notation, numbered 1 through 5, representing a five-part setting of the hymn 'The Rose Tree'. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating the key of D major. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1:** Starts with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note (F#4), and then a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a final D4 quarter note.
- Staff 2:** Starts with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note (B3), and then eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a final D4 quarter note.
- Staff 3:** Starts with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note (B3), and then eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a final D4 quarter note.
- Staff 4:** Starts with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note (F#4), and then eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a final D4 quarter note.
- Staff 5:** Starts with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note (F#4), and then eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a final D4 quarter note.



E. Add a bass to these C.F.s, using four notes to one:

F. Add a bass to these C.F.s, using a mixture of four and two notes to the beat:

## CHAPTER IV

### SYNCOPTION

1. Any note of a chord may be tied over a bar line, or over the secondary accent in a bar of 4/4 time, that is, over the third beat of the bar. This produces syncopation, or displacing of the accent momentarily.

If the tied note becomes a concord over the accent, it is free to move to any other concord, usually to another note of the same chord, since the chord will probably change on the third beat rather than on the second. Here are some examples of tied notes becoming concords:

2. When the tied note becomes a discord, that discord, which is known as a suspension, must resolve to a concord. This resolution is usually made by the discord falling a step, although there are cases where it may rise effectively.

Since figures represent distances of the upper notes from the bass, the following suspensions should be clear to the student of harmony.

9 8, 7 8, 7 6, 6 5, 4 3, 2 3.

These are all suspensions above the C.F. The 9 8, 7 8, and 6 5 are of no great value in two-part work because they all resolve on perfect concords, 8 or 5, leaving out the third of the chord. The 7 6 and the 4 3 are much more effective:



3. The only suspension of musical value below a C.F. in two parts is a 2 falling to a 3. The figuring for this is  $\frac{5}{2}$ , since it resolves on the first inversion of a triad. The two dashes indicate that the upper notes remain stationary while the suspension resolves, making the upper notes  $\frac{6}{3}$  from the bass at that point. It is better that the 2 be heard above the suspension first, when both notes are to be used in succession. Of course the 2 may remain without moving to 5:

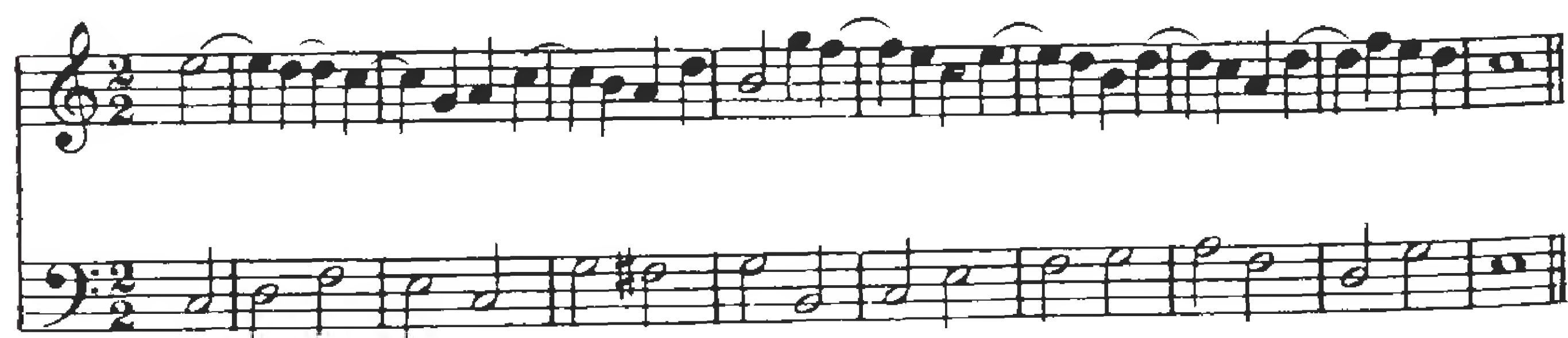


4. Suspensions may resolve on the second or the third beats of a bar in triple or quadruple time. If they resolve on the third beat they generally do so ornamentally, with the second beat containing another note of the same chord, an auxiliary note, or a pair of eighth notes which move by step.



A suspension must never have the note of resolution doubled above the suspension. This rules out a 7 8 suspension below the C.F. which is extremely harsh.

5. Do not write a chain of suspensions without breaking them a few times by inserting a bar of two notes to one. They are a means to an end and have their rightful place in all florid counterpoint which will be discussed in the next chapter:

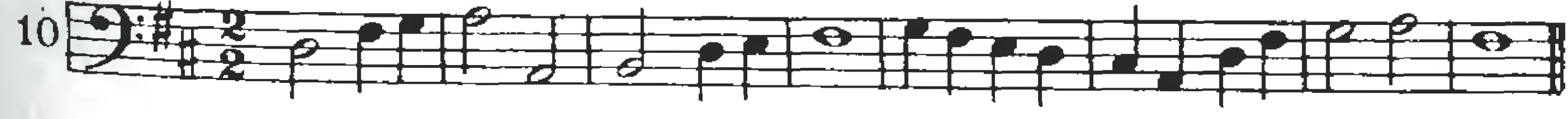
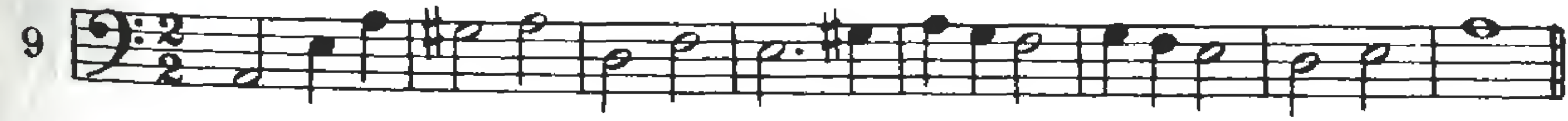
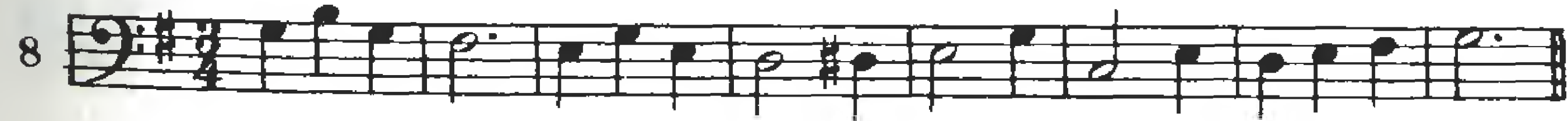
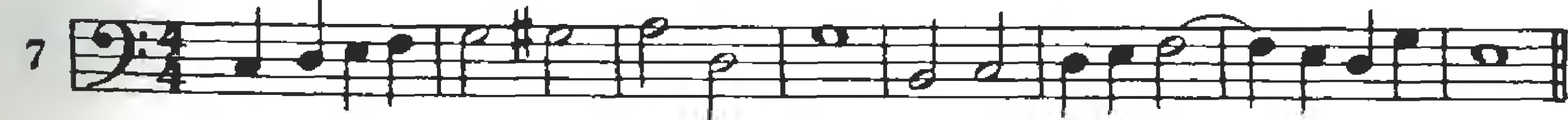
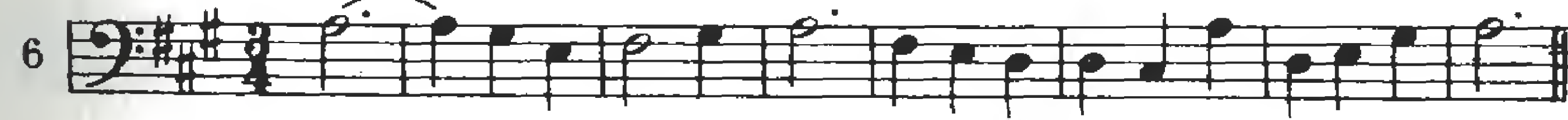
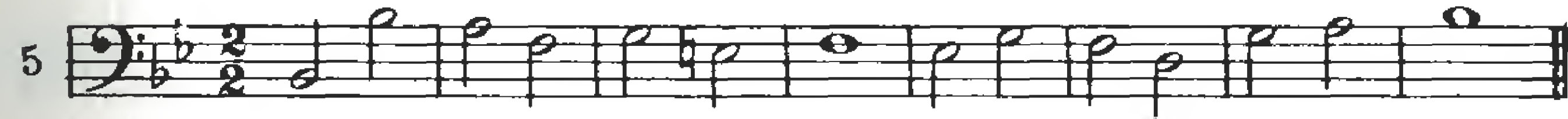
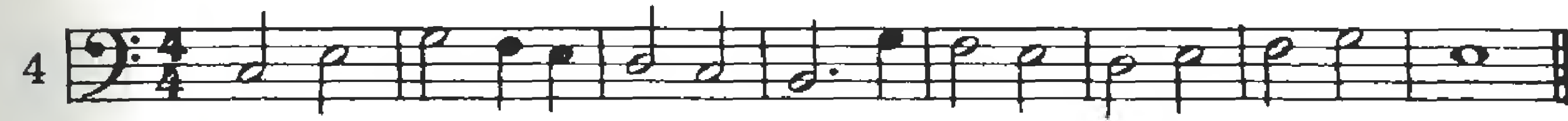
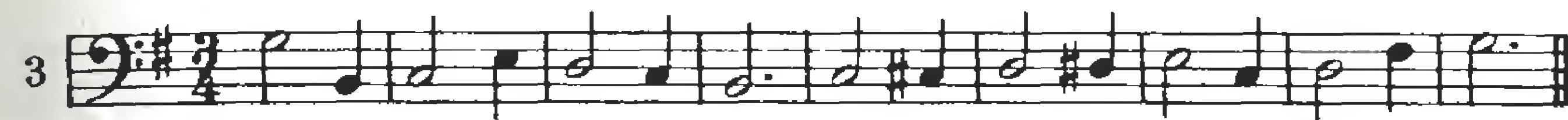
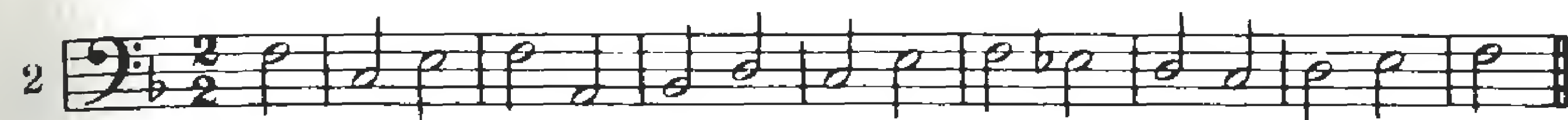
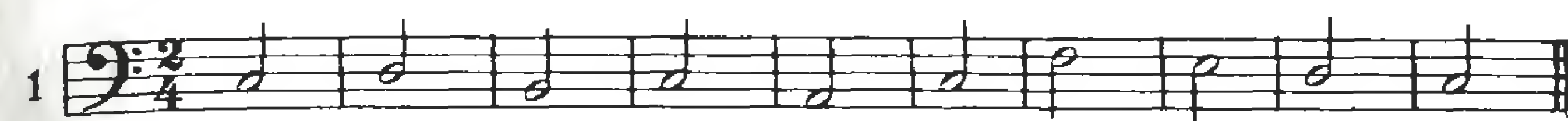


Suspensions need not always be tied:



## EXERCISES TO CHAPTER IV

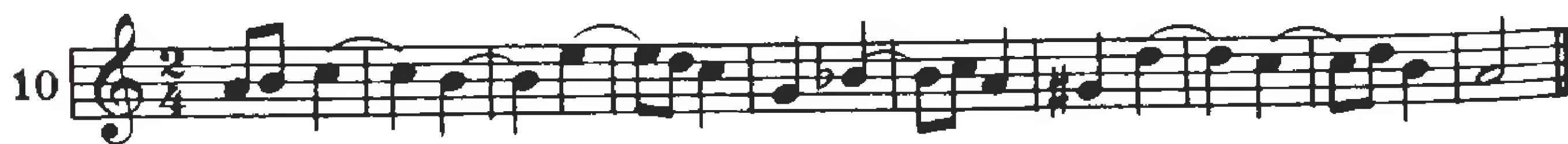
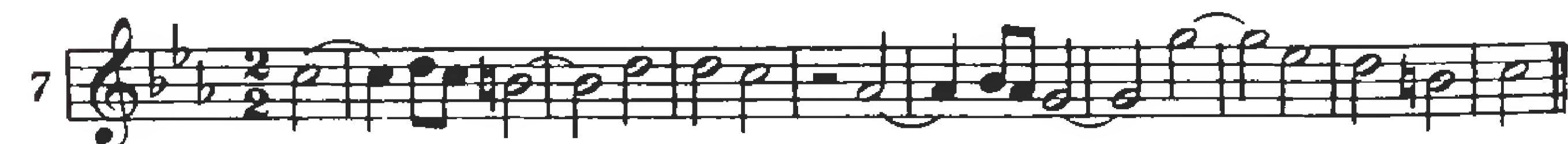
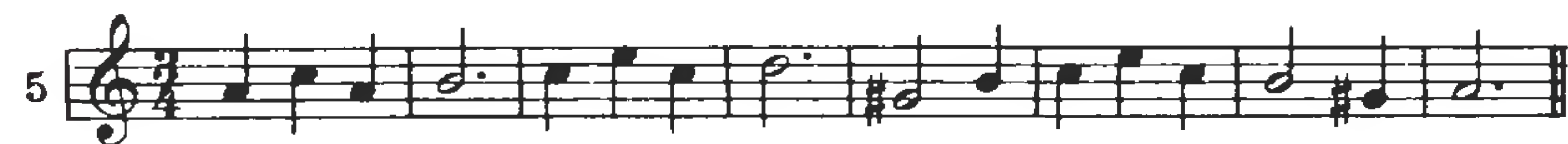
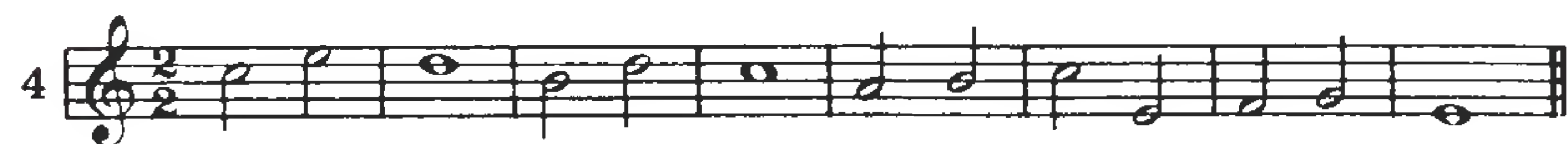
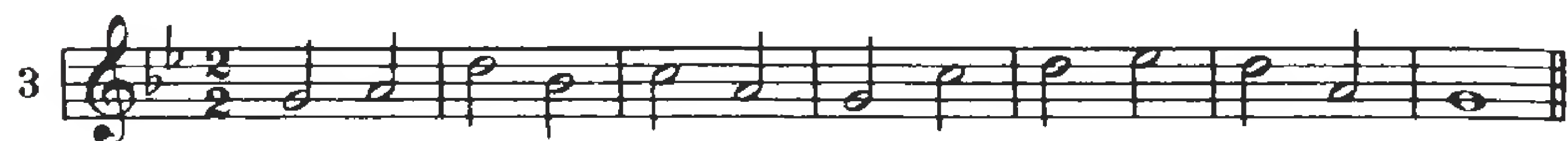
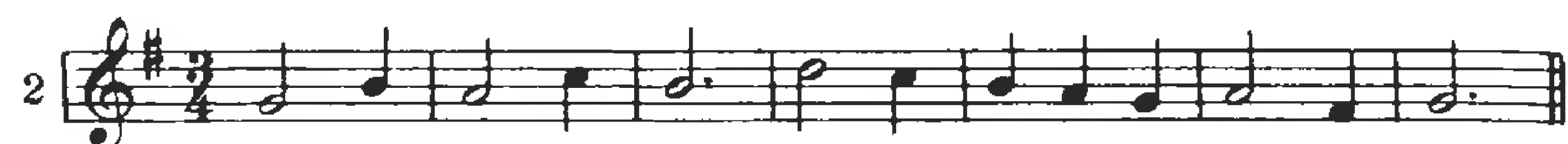
A. Add a soprano to each of these C.F.s. using a mixture of tied notes and two notes to one:





B. Add a bass to each of these melodies, using tied notes where convenient, and two notes against one for variety.

Do not use suspensions in both parts at the same time in exercises 6-10.



## CHAPTER V

### FLORID COUNTERPOINT IN TWO PARTS

1. The melodic ideas already introduced consist of one, two, three or four notes to one beat, with some suspensions. It is now possible to combine these rhythms in such a way that produces a flowing type of melody which combines well with a C.F. also in florid style.

The following rhythmic figures are better avoided in vocal counterpoint, although they could be used in instrumental work:



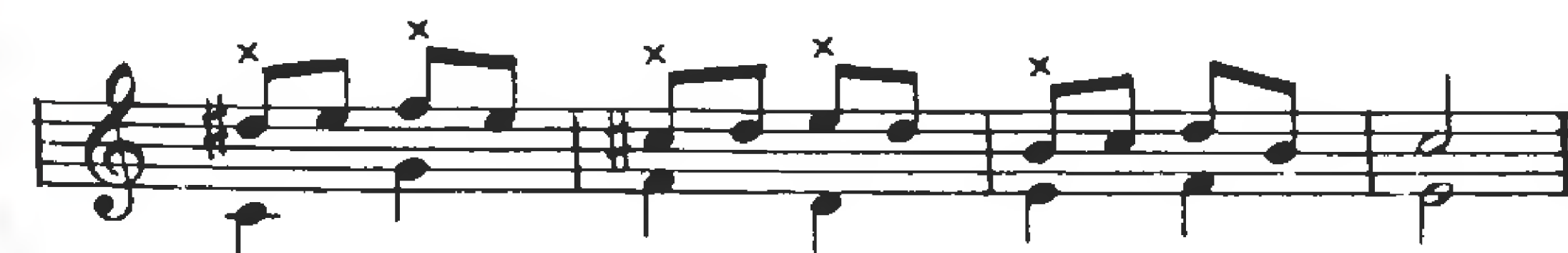
2. **Unessential notes** play a vital part in the formation of smooth and interesting melodies. Those which have been discussed have been used off the beat, that is, unaccented notes. The one exception is the use of two changing notes in triplet beats. It now remains to introduce other unessential notes which do not occur so frequently, yet have their part in the making of good tunes.

3. **Appoggiaturas.** An appoggiatura could well be described as an unprepared suspension. It behaves as a suspension in resolution, moving one step downwards generally, but occasionally it may rise. It may be approached in several ways:

(a) By step from a note on the opposite side to that note on which it is to resolve, so that the appoggiatura moves scalewise. It may then be called an accented passing note. It displaces the harmony note and resolves into it:

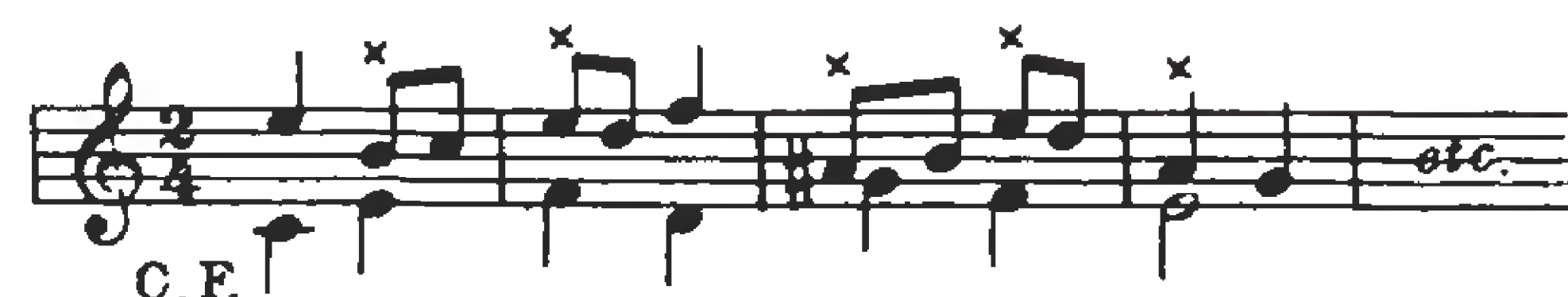


(b) By step from the same note to which it is to move, becoming an accented auxiliary note. The lower auxiliary note is usually more effective if it is a semitone below the harmony note. As before, upper auxiliaries are diatonic:





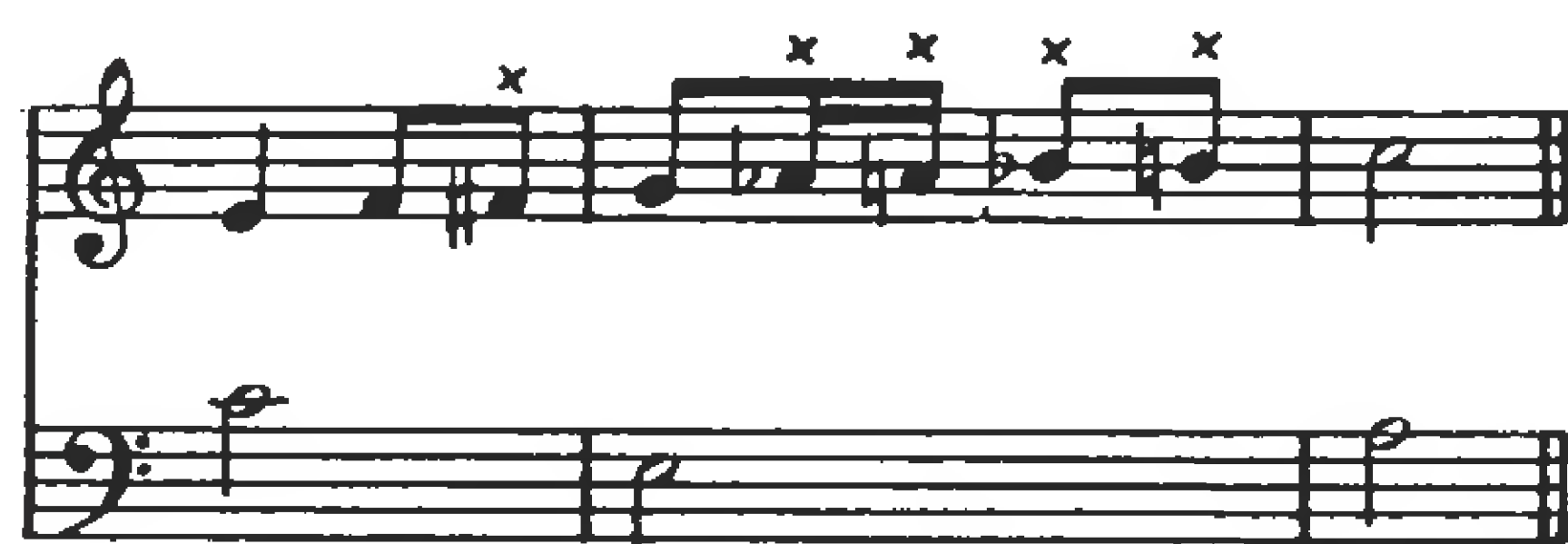
(c) By any note which leaps, usually from the opposite direction to which the appoggiatura is to move:



Appoggiaturas are used much more frequently in the upper part than in the bass.

#### 4. Chromatic passing notes.

These notes move by semitone, and are used rarely. They should continue chromatically until a harmony note is reached:



#### 5. Anticipations.

An anticipation is the introduction of one note of the succeeding chord before the chord itself is heard. It is better to reserve the anticipation until the cadence, and then it should be a note of short duration:



6. In blending the various rhythms discussed and keeping them interesting with a simple but correct harmonic basis, here are some suggestions:

Avoid more than two successive bars with tied notes over the strong accent.

Avoid more than three bars with a mixture of quarters and eighths.

Try to make eighth notes move as smoothly as possible.

If the second of a pair of eighth notes leaps, that note is a harmony note.

Insert a short rest occasionally to give shape to the phrases.

It is by no means imperative, nor is it always possible, to move over bar-lines by step, but it does help to make a flowing melody.

The time signature of a C.F. may readily be changed from 2/2 to 2/4 without altering the effect of the music. Obviously every note and rest in the latter will be halved in time value, both in the C.F. and the added part:



7. Imitation. In two-part florid counterpoint imitation is optional. It may be used when the opening of the C.F. is specially suggestive of it. The true meaning of imitation should be observed — it is not necessarily an exact reproduction of a musical figure previously introduced, but rather a general allegiance to a pattern, with some consideration for rhythm. The following imitative openings are good, although there is a slight departure from the given melodic pattern each case:



It is always helpful to reproduce a short figure at convenient places throughout the counterpoint to give unity to the tune.

Never use a repeated or a tied note in both parts at the same time. Alternate the rhythm of each part so that there is something moving on every beat.

At present two eighth notes may be heard together only as passing or auxiliary notes used in pairs according to the rules given in Chapter II.

Let the first beat of each bar have a 3, 6 or 7 if possible. When a suspension is used it should be a 7, 6, or a 4, 3 above the C.F. and a 2, 3 below the C.F., so that the intervals mentioned may be reached in the resolution. The 7 above the C.F. may be resolved as part of a chord of the seventh instead of a suspension. Its inversion a 2, when used below the C.F., is under the same rule.



If the chord does not change roots but moves to another note of the same chord an appoggiatura may be heard against it as a discord since it moves by step into a concord:



### 8. What to do with a long note.

Change the position of the same chord, or move to a new chord halfway through the bar in duple or quadruple time, or on the third beat in triple time. Use some unessential notes between the harmony notes of the moving part.

If the long note is tied over a bar and falls a step at that point, treat it as a suspension or the seventh of any chord of the seventh with a proper resolution. Remember that it is not always advisable to tie a suspension, especially in vocal work where the words govern the rhythm of the music.

Here is an example with some long notes:



## EXERCISES TO CHAPTER V

A. Add a flowing (or florid) Bass part to these melodies:





6 

7 



8 



9 

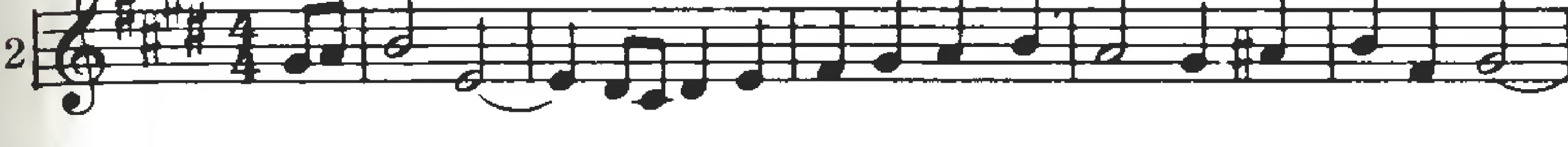


10 



11 




12 




13 



14 

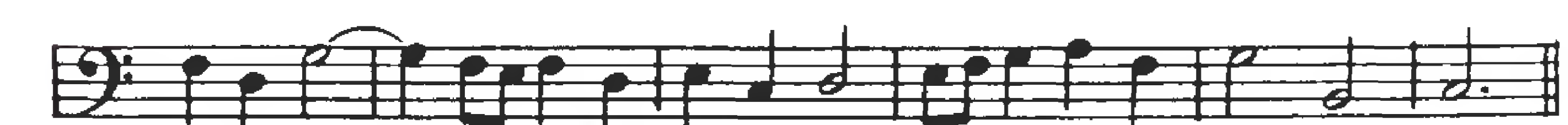
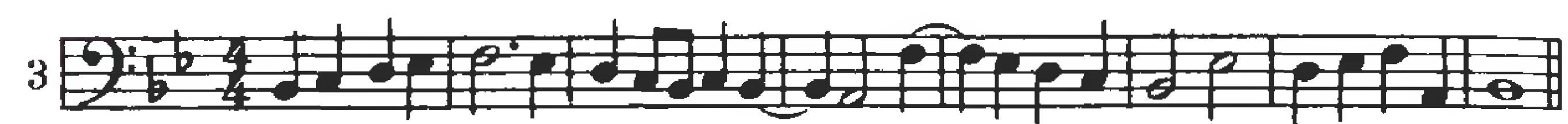
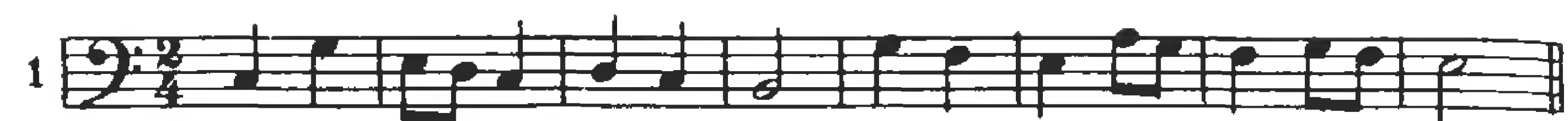


15 





B. Add a florid melody to these basses:





12 



13 



14 



15 



## CHAPTER VI

# DOUBLE COUNTERPOINT

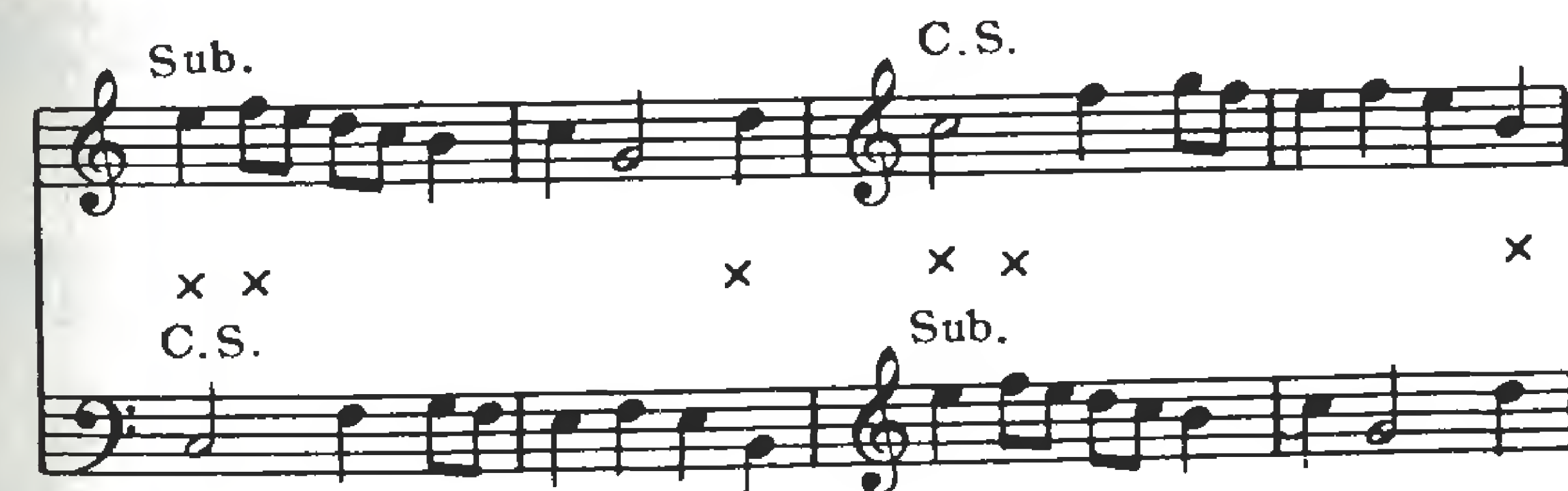
1. Double, or invertible counterpoint is the combination of two different melodies which sound as well together when the parts are inverted as they do in the original position; that is, the C.F. may be in the bass with the counterpoint above it, or the C.F. may be in the treble with the same counterpoint below it. This type of counterpoint may be either vocal or instrumental in style. Such combinations of melodies are frequently used in fugues and inventions, when the C.F. is usually called the Subject and the added part the Counter-subject. These terms will be used in this chapter.

There are several methods of inverting two themes. They may be inverted at the octave above or below, at the tenth, the twelfth or the fifteenth, which is a double octave. Elementary work includes double counterpoint at the fifteenth and octave only.

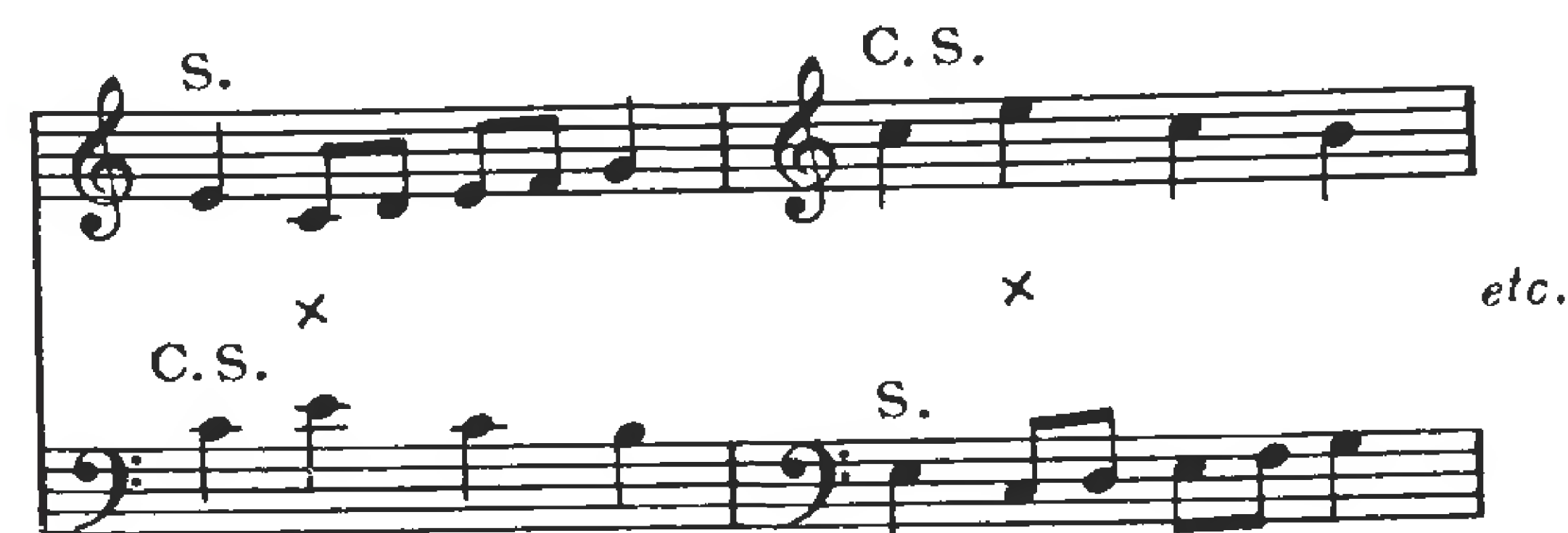
### 2. Double counterpoint at the fifteenth.

These fundamental rules must be kept:

(a) The two parts must never exceed the interval from each other at which they are to invert, that is, they must never be over a fifteenth apart or they will not invert:



(b) The parts must not cross each other at any point, or they will not invert in those places where they cross:

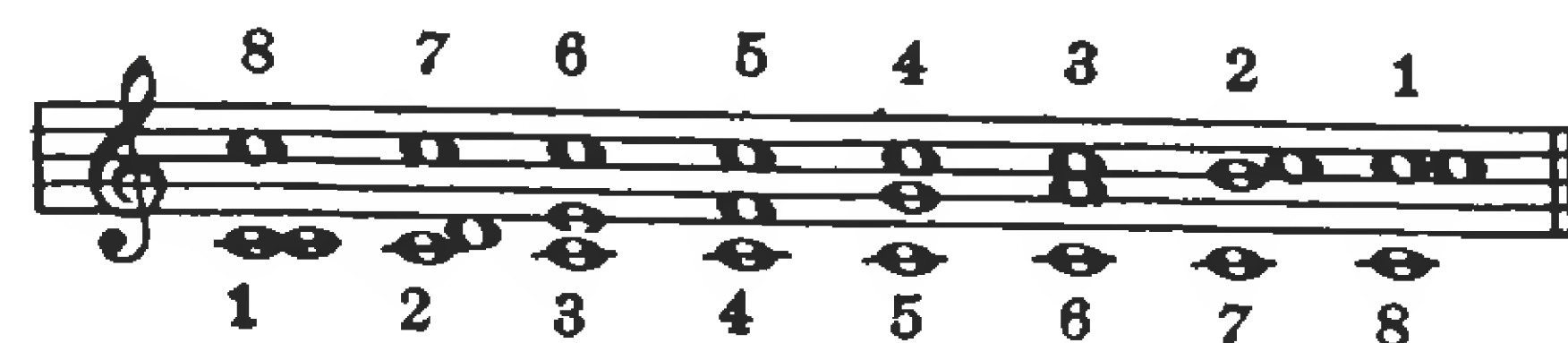


Parts are not inverted at x, but merely brought closer together.



(c) The treatment of intervals in inversion:

This chart shows what each interval becomes when inverted. It should be understood that these are simple intervals, but the same plan holds good for compound intervals of a ninth or more.



The difficult interval to manage is the perfect fifth. When inverted it becomes a perfect fourth, which must be treated as a discord, therefore the perfect fifth must be treated as an unessential note, that is an appoggiatura or a suspension if it is on an accented beat. It may be a passing note when it is off the accent, or it may be another note of the same chord, sometimes called a bye-tone. In such cases it must move on by step, similar to an arpeggio six-four in harmony:



3. A tied note over a bar line, or a repeated note over any accent should be considered either as a seventh of the chord or as a suspension. In both cases it falls one step in resolution:



4. Augmented fourths and diminished fifths are parts of a dominant seventh chord and may be freely used if they resolve. The augmented intervals resolve by expansion of the two notes and the diminished fifth by contraction:



5. The diminished seventh may be used if the seventh resolves while the leading note remains or if the seventh remains while the leading note moves up a diminished fifth. If both notes of the VII7o resolve together they will produce a perfect fifth:



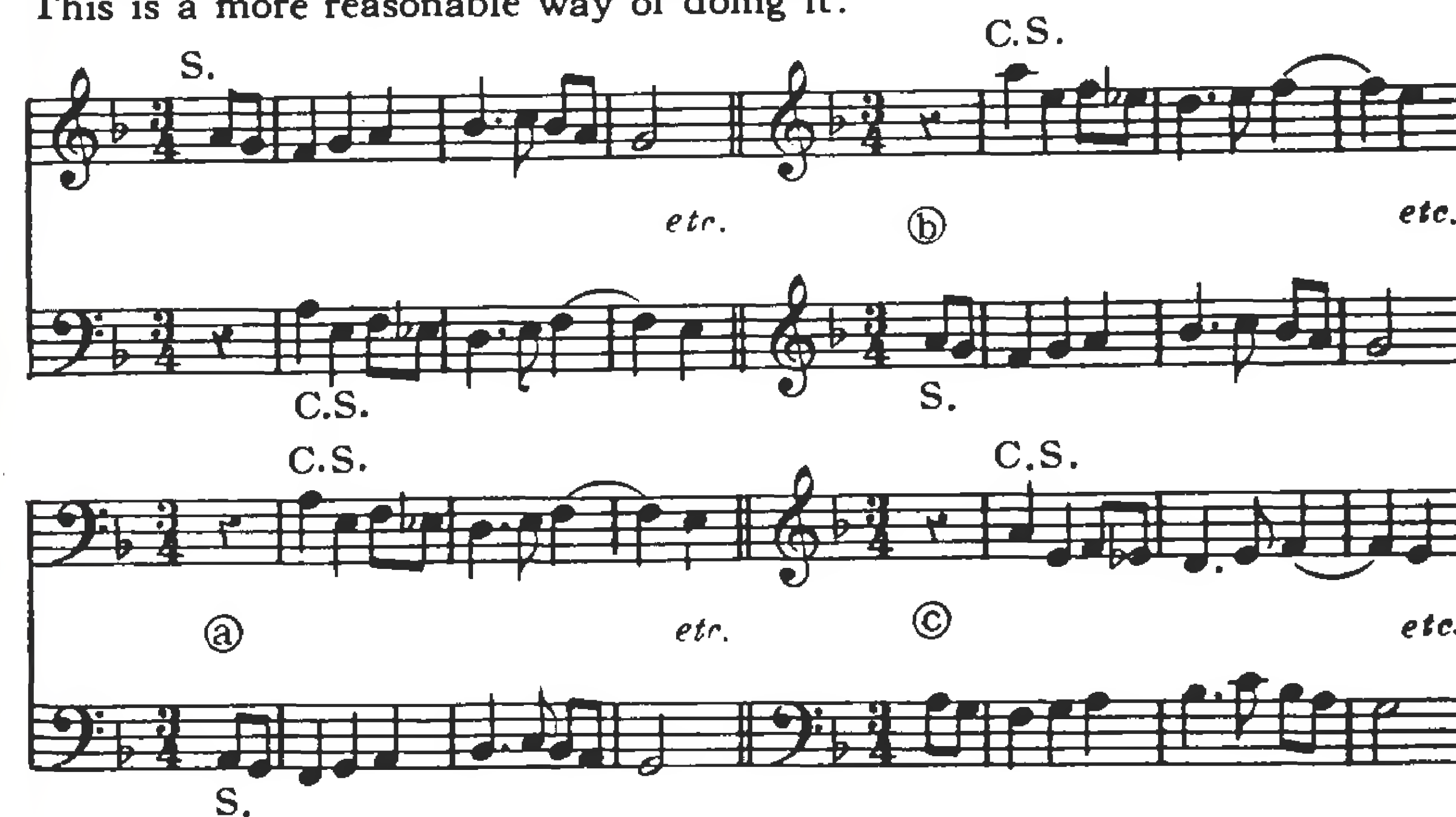
6. Inversion of counterpoint at the fifteenth may be made in three different ways:

(a) By moving the treble down two octaves.

(b) By moving the bass up two octaves.

(c) By moving the treble down an octave and the bass up an octave.

This is a more reasonable way of doing it:



7. The rhythm of the two parts should be contrasted. Imitation is not advisable, since the purpose of double counterpoint is to combine two different themes. However, if the subject is sequential, there is no good reason why the counter-subject should not become sequential too:

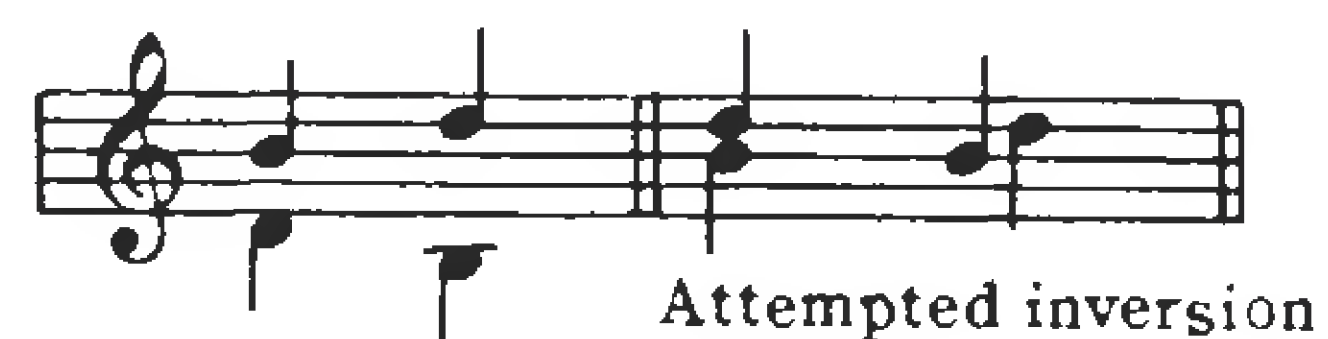




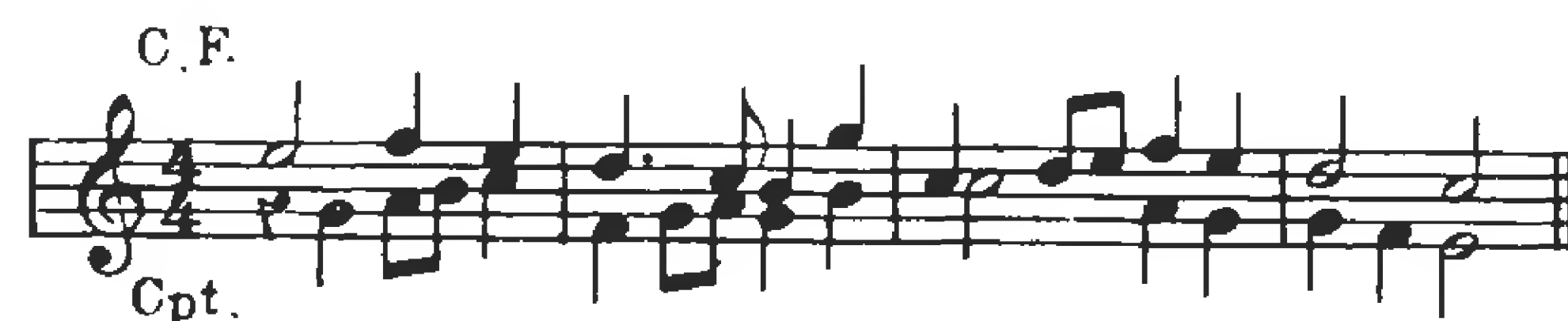
## 8. Double counterpoint at the octave:

This type of double counterpoint is usually vocal, but of course it may be instrumental if desired. It is more difficult to write than counterpoint at the fifteenth because of its limited compass. So first of all, while most of the previous rules are in force, one change must be made:

The subject and counter-subject must never be more than an octave apart or they will not invert. Needless to say the parts must not cross:



9. It should be readily understood that double counterpoint at the octave is also invertible at the fifteenth, but the converse is not true. Here is an example of counterpoint at the octave inverted both at the octave and the fifteenth:



Inversion at the octave.

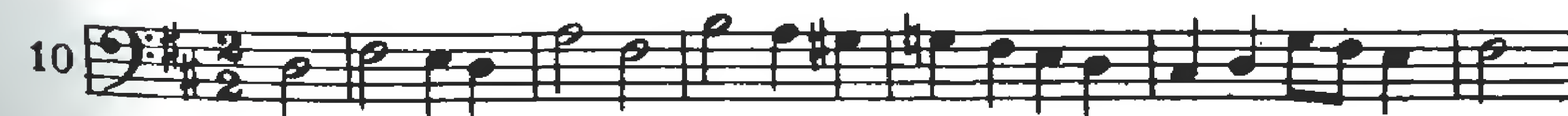
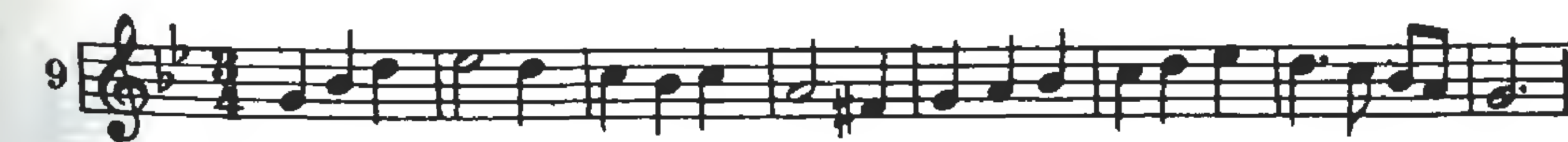
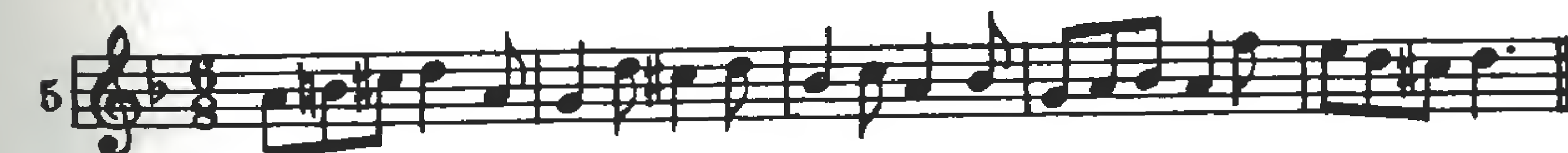
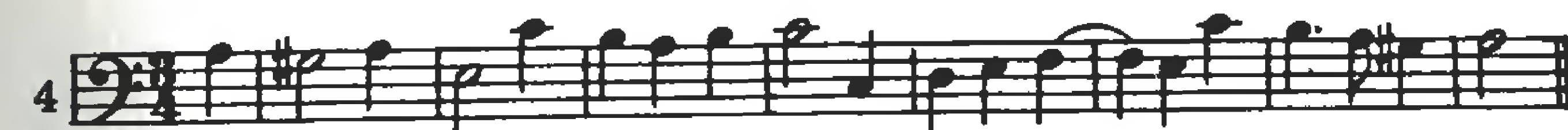


Inversion at the fifteenth.



## EXERCISES TO CHAPTER VI

A. Add a countersubject to each of the following subjects in double counterpoint at the fifteenth. Write in vocal or instrumental style as desired.





B. Add a counter-subject in double counterpoint at the octave to each of these subjects, which may be vocal or instrumental as desired:

## CHAPTER VII

### THREE-PART COUNTERPOINT: ADDING TWO FLORID PARTS TO A CHORALE TUNE

1. In three-part counterpoint the harmonic basis is more in evidence. Chords may be complete, and the rules of harmonic progressions must be followed.

In two-part work the intervals of the perfect fifth and octave were approached by contrary motion, so that consecutive fifths and octaves did not occur. Now the chords may cause such errors if they are not properly joined. It therefore becomes necessary to point out the faults must frequently found in elementary attempts at writing counterpoint in three parts.

#### 2. Consecutive octaves and fifths.

These are never allowed. Octaves may sound well but they destroy the independence of the parts. Perfect fifths in succession sound badly in this type of work. Consecutive fifths which are repeated are not objectionable but it is rare that two notes are repeated together in counterpoint.

If a perfect fifth and a diminished fifth follow each other they are good if the lower note moves a semitone.

Passing notes sometimes produce consecutive fifths, but they never justify them. A passage incorrect without passing notes is equally incorrect with them. Here are examples of consecutive octaves and fifths:

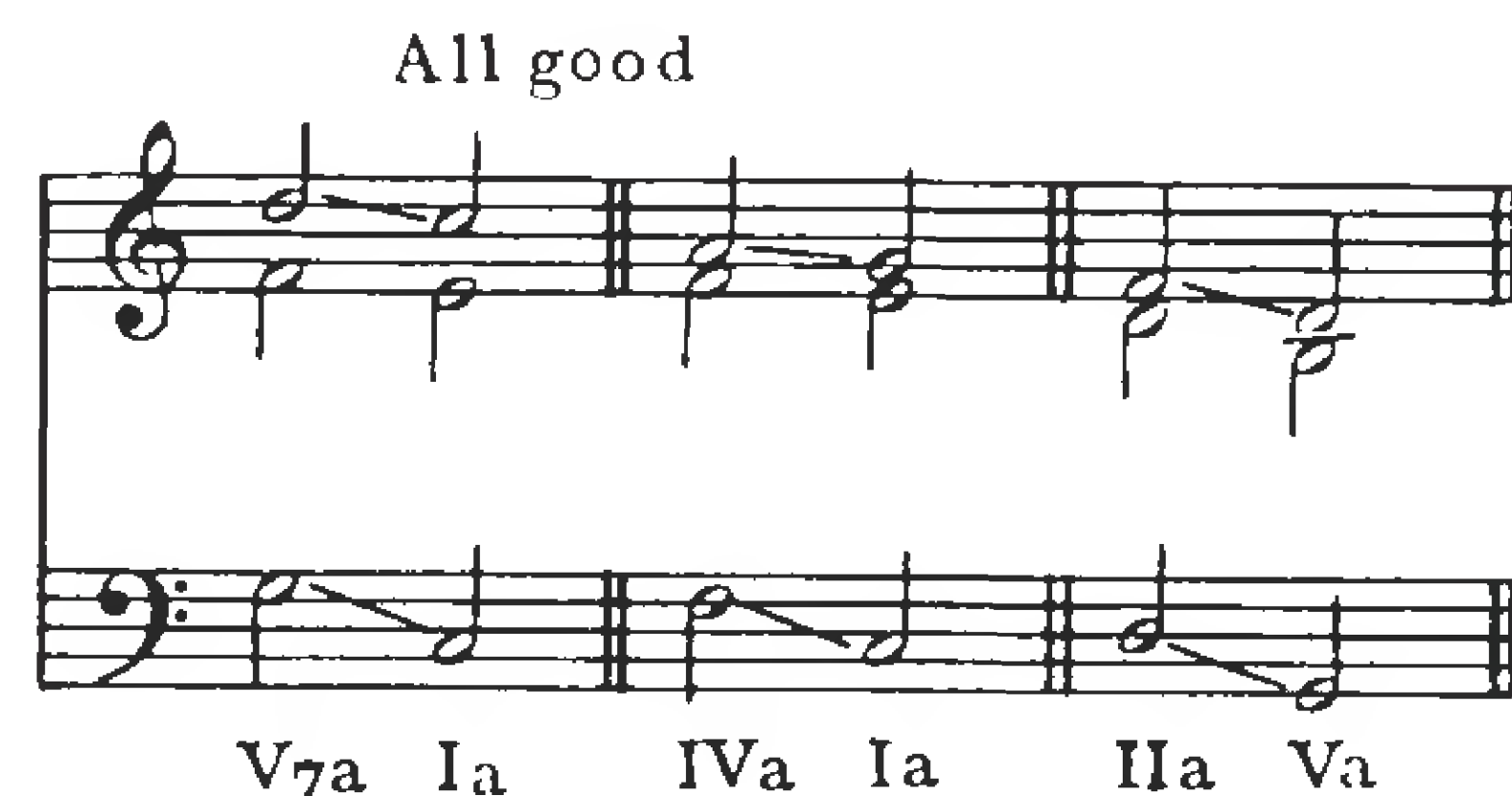


### 3. Exposed octaves and fifths.

These occur when an octave or a fifth between the *outside* parts is approached by similar motion.

They are allowed if the soprano moves by tone or semitone, and the two chords used are primary triads — I, IV or V.

A fifth may be approached by leap in the soprano if the two chords are II to Va.



### 4. Weak progressions.

IIa to Ia is not good. Va to IVa is not good if the leading note is in the soprano. VIIb to Va or V7 is not good . . . they have two notes in common and give the effect of a repeated chord.

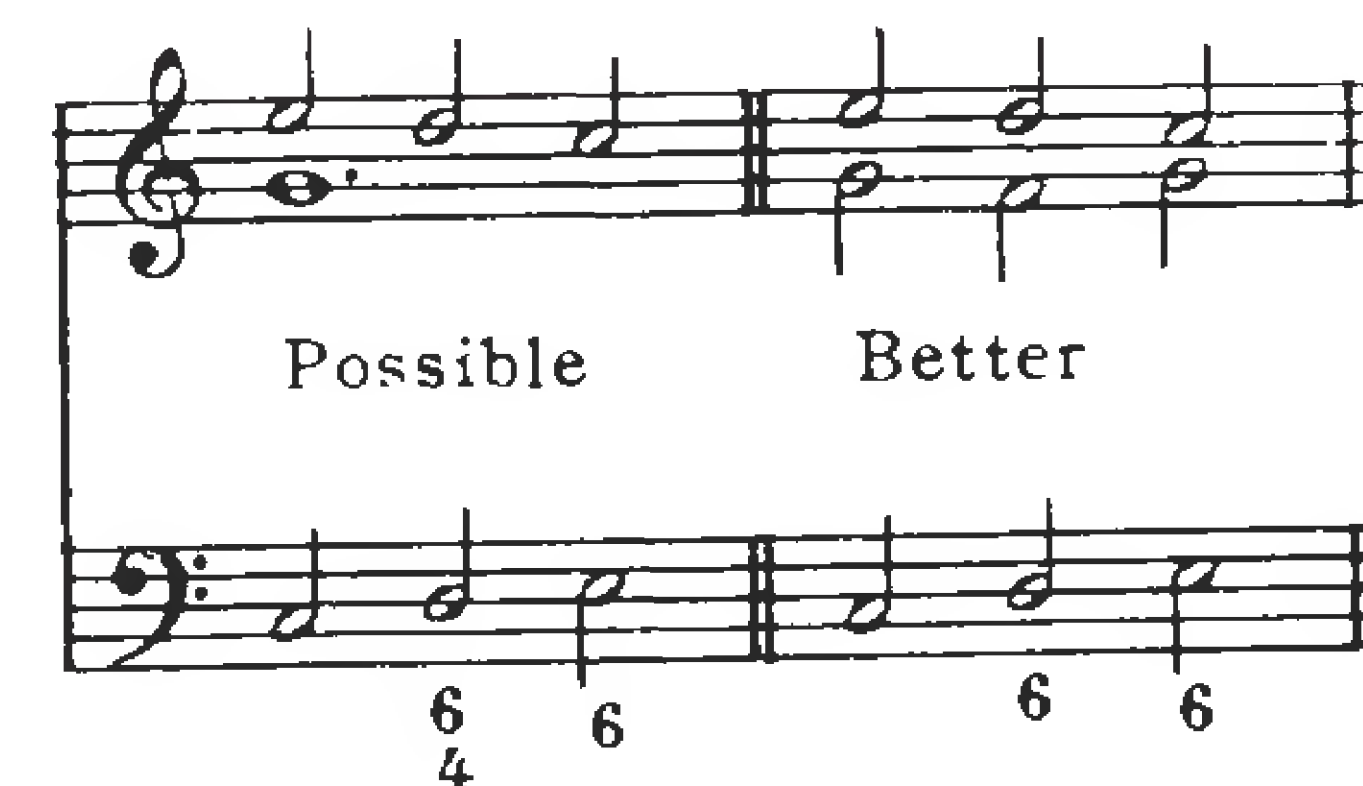
IIa is not good in a minor key, except when the melodic scale is being used in the C.F. IIIa and IIIb are rarely used in minor keys. Avoid VIIa.

### 5. Six-four chords.

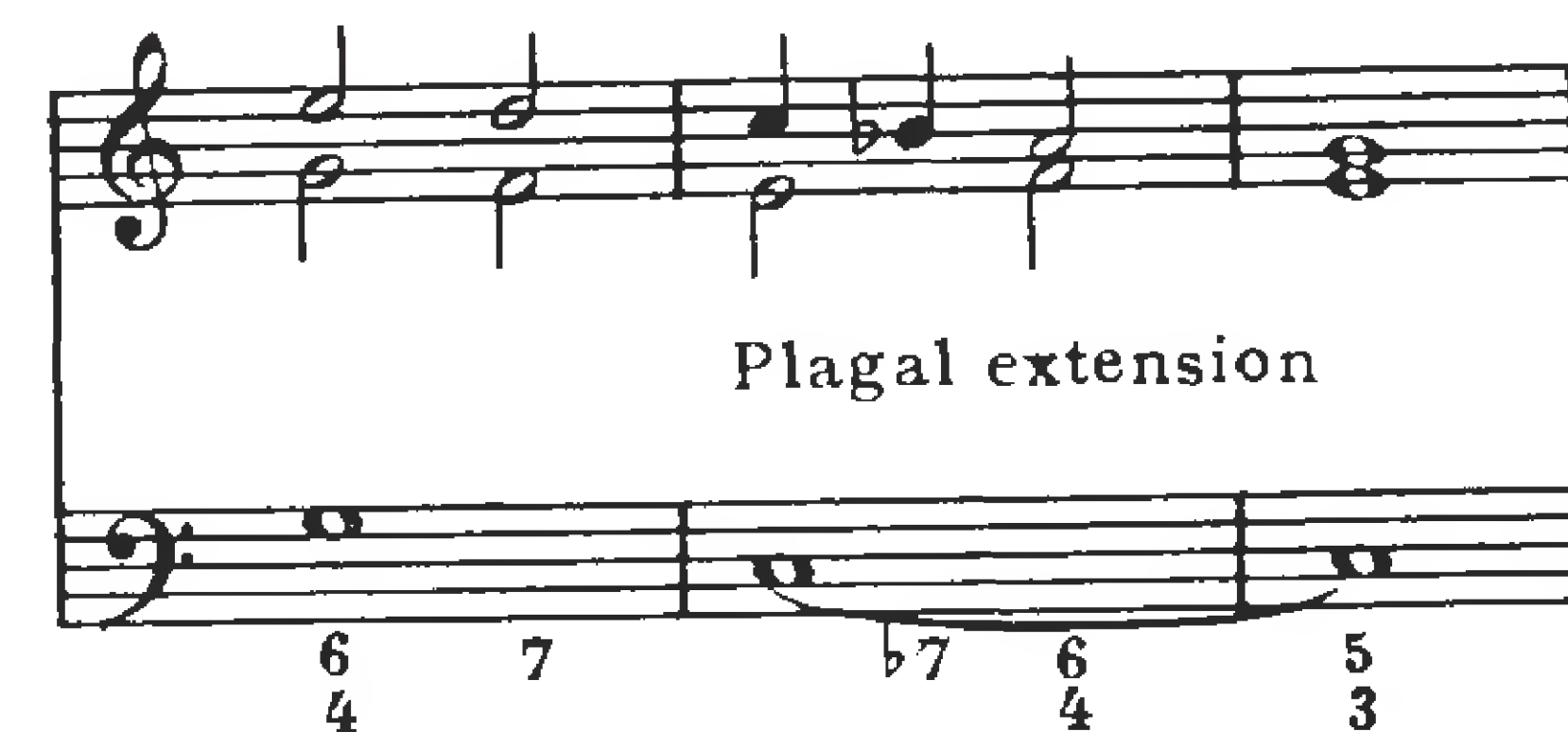
These may now be used with reservation. They should be complete when possible. The cadential six-four makes a good approach to Va, V7, and to a VII7o of the relative minor key. Therefore they may be used at cadences when desired. This chord must never be approached from a chord which contains the leading note, nor from an inversion of another chord unless the bass moves by step:



The passing six-four is weak, but may sometimes be used between Ia and Ib, or IVa and IVb, with these pairs of chords reversed when necessary. VIIb is a much better chord to insert between Ia and Ib. The six-four holds up the movement in one of the parts:



A pedal or auxiliary six-four is useful in making a plagal extension, that is, an additional bar or two after the music has arrived at a perfect or a deceptive cadence. This six-four is always on a tonic bass and produces the chord IVc. After these chords have been sketched in, the seventh of the V7 of the subdominant key may be inserted with good effect:



6. The diminished seventh chord on the leading note (V117o) may now be used in root position with the third omitted, since that note of the chord has no fixed progression. The complete chord may be used if the third and fifth are written in broken form.

Inversions of this chord are not recommended in three-part counterpoint. The chord may resolve directly to Ia, or it may pass through V7b if the seventh resolves while the other notes remain.



The supertonic seventh always makes a good approach to a cadence, and may be freely used in root position or first inversion. A complete chord of the seventh on any note is possible if two of the notes are used in succession while the other two remain stationary:

The diagram illustrates two types of seventh chords: Diminished sevenths and Supertonic sevenths. The Diminished sevenths section shows two examples: one in treble clef (A-) and one in bass clef (C+). The Supertonic sevenths section shows two examples: one in treble clef and one in bass clef. The notes are written in a sequence, with some notes tied across measures. The bass clef examples include figured bass notation: 7, 7, 7 6 5, 7, and 6 5.

### 3. Modulation in chorales:

If a chorale tune is short one modulation may be sufficient, and this will usually be to the dominant key if the chorale is written in a major key. If it is written in a minor key, the modulation may be made to the relative major. Chorales of three or four phrases may have several modulations, all to related keys. The half-way cadence, if there is one, should be in the dominant key or its relative minor, and this may be preceded by a transition or modulation to the relative minor of the home or given key. After the dominant modulation, it is effective to go to the flat side of the key, that is, to the subdominant and its relative minor. Indeed, it has already been seen that a move into the subdominant key may be used in the final cadence with a plagal extension. Here is a chorale with a simple treatment of plain chords showing the possible modulations. Naturally, the added parts will have a more elaborate texture as will shortly be seen:

The musical notation shows a chorale in G major (one sharp). The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature changes to D major (two sharps) in the final measure, indicating a modulation to the dominant key.

The musical notation shows a chorale in G major (one sharp). The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature changes to D major (two sharps) in the final measure, indicating a modulation to the dominant key.

### 4. Adding two florid parts above a chorale in the bass.

The upper parts should have those melodic characteristics shown in chapter V, with an alternative rhythm, so that one part is moving while the other has a longer note. This does not mean that both parts may not have the same rhythm for two or three beats occasionally, especially where eighth notes are being used. Notes struck together are better to be concords, although an appoggiatura 4 3 or 7 6 may be heard against another moving note, especially if the chord does not change.

5. **Good imitative counterpoint** may be written by starting with a theme derived from the beginning of the chorale in shorter notes (diminution). This imitation need not be melodically exact, but it is better to maintain the rhythm if possible. Strict reproduction is rather mechanical, so try to make the imitation slightly free:

The musical notation shows a chorale in G major (one sharp). The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature changes to D major (two sharps) in the final measure, indicating a modulation to the dominant key. The notation includes a 'etc.' at the end of the melody, suggesting a continuation of the imitative counterpoint.

Imitation may use an independent figure which should be long enough to be impressive, and which should enter as soon as possible. Imitation may be used at the beginning of each phrase. It may be similar to the first figure, or to another one in somewhat similar rhythm but in keeping with the chorale. This figure or a derivative of it should appear a few times during the course of the tune, with careful joining by suspensions and other notes. It is often possible to introduce the figure in the plagal extension:



Opening bars of chorale



Final cadence extended



#### 6. Adding two parts in florid style below a chorale in the treble.

The same principles of writing apply to this type of problem. It is better to sketch the harmony in first, using complete triads where possible, with an occasional dominant or secondary seventh. Then invent a short theme for imitation or use the opening notes of the chorale for this purpose. Write in two or three of these short figures at appropriate places, then fill up the counterpoint with suspensions and ornamental resolutions, taking care to divide the honours between the two added parts.

When the C.F. or chorale is in the middle voice the problem is slightly more difficult, but the same procedure should be used and if care is taken it can produce excellent results.

Chorale in the soprano. Elaborate added parts.



Chorale in the alto. Less movement in the added parts.



Here are two chorale tunes, each with three phrases, illustrating some of the points mentioned:





# EXERCISES TO CHAPTER VII

A. Add two imitative florid parts above these chorale tunes:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

B. Add two imitative florid parts below each of these chorale melodies:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10



C. Add two imitative florid parts above each of these chorale tunes.

1

2

3

4

5

D. Add two imitative florid parts below each of these chorales:

1

2

3

4

5



E. Add a bass and soprano in florid counterpoint to these chorales in the alto:

10 musical staves of chorales for alto voice, numbered 1 to 10. Each staff contains a single melodic line in various keys and time signatures.

F. Additional chorale tunes: Add two imitative florid parts:

10 musical staves of additional chorale tunes, numbered 1 to 10. Each staff contains a single melodic line in various keys and time signatures.



## CHAPTER VIII

# GROUND BASSES

1. A ground bass is a short passage—from four to eight bars—repeated several times with a change of harmony and contrapuntal texture above it with each repetition. In elementary work it is convenient to start with two parts only, then follow it by two statements of three-part counterpoint with increasing interest in the rhythm and harmony.

If such a bass were repeated many times it would become a passacaglia. For elementary examinations it is usually sufficient for the student to be able to present the bass three times in succession with varied contrapuntal treatment, differing with each repetition of the bass. It would seem logical to write one part only above the first presentation of the bass, then follow with two workings in three parts, that is, by adding two interesting parts above the bass.

2. When writing three part work the student may use any chords which fit into the texture. Obviously extreme chords would be out of place, but there are a few chromatic chords which may be used on occasion, provided they move along smoothly from one chord to another. A knowledge of the chief chromatic chords may be acquired from any harmony textbook. Here is a brief explanation of a few chords which may be used:

### 3. The Neapolitan sixth.

This chord is built on the IV of the key. It is much more effective in minor keys than in major. The upper notes are the minor third and minor sixth from the bass, and the sixth should be the highest note.

It resolves naturally to Va, V7a or V7d. The two upper notes should fall . . . the sixth usually falls a diminished third, unless it moves through a passing note. It is possible to resolve it to a cadential six-four but it is awkward in three part work.

Whenever the given bass moves up from IV to V this chord will fit, but is better reserved for a precadential chord:



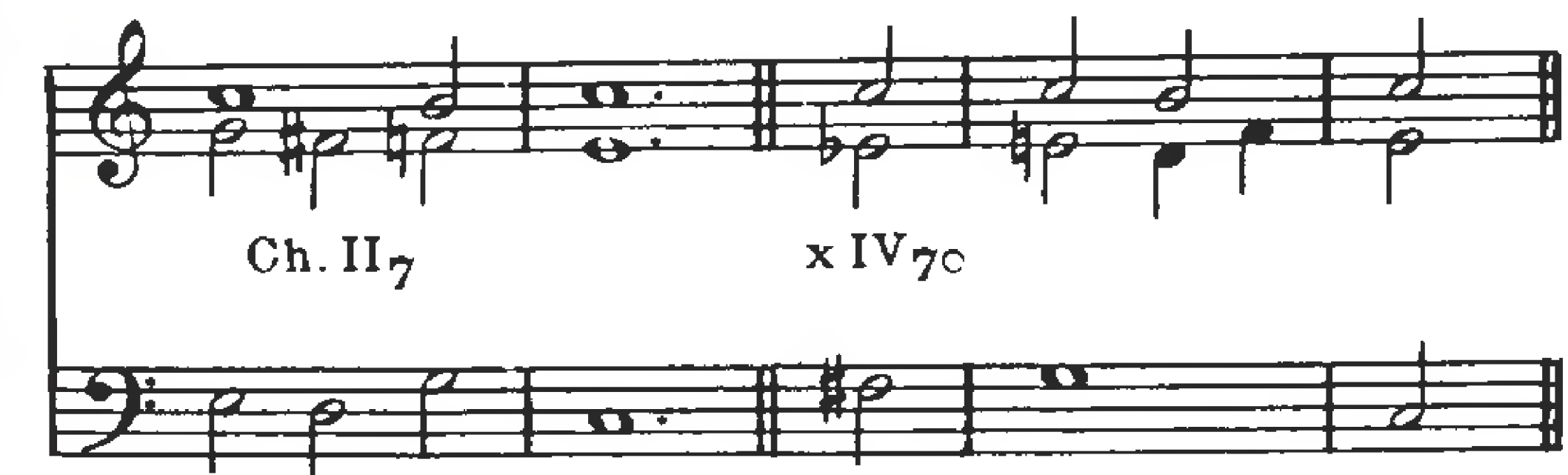
### 4. The Augmented sixth.

This chord should be built on the minor VI of the scale. It consists of the augmented sixth and the tonic above the bass note. In its plain three-note form it is known as the Italian sixth. If the supertonic is added it becomes a French sixth, and if the minor mediant of the scale is added instead of the supertonic it is a German sixth. In three part work the Italian sixth is the only one available, since it has only three notes, although it may pass through either or both of the other forms in a decorative manner:



### 5. Chromatic supertonic harmony.

The Chromatic supertonic seventh may be used wherever the diatonic II7 is used. The ChII9- is found on the supertonic, and if the root is omitted the resultant chord is a diminished seventh. This diminished seventh is usually symbolized xIV7o, because it is built on the raised subdominant of the key. This chord is specially good before a cadence since it resolves naturally on a cadential six-four or a dominant seventh. It is better used in its root position:



6. In working a ground bass, copy the bass three times in succession, omitting the final tonic until the end of the third statement of the bass. The tonic may be extended one or two bars if desired to make a plagal extension. In the two-part working the melody should have some design, perhaps sequential, or at least it should contain a rhythmic feature worth repeating. It should lead into the three part work with no suggestion of a cadence:





7. The next two statements should have two added parts above. The first of these workings may feature modulations and suspensions, with a short motive used once or twice in each of the added parts. It should follow the first statement of two-part counterpoint logically with increased interest as it progresses:



8. The third working is the place for a chromatic chord if it will fit, involving modulation when necessary. It should work up to some sort of climax if possible. Cadences are avoided until the end of this section when there will be a full close, and sometimes as suggested earlier, a plagal extension:



9. The above suggestions are not binding. If the student wishes to write three parts first, then by way of contrast use two part writing as an episode leading to the final treatment of the bass in three parts, that is his privilege. It is by no means imperative that chromatic chords be used. They should be used sparingly and enter into the music naturally instead of being forced in to show the examiner that they are there.

10. Here is a complete working as suggested in the last three paragraphs:



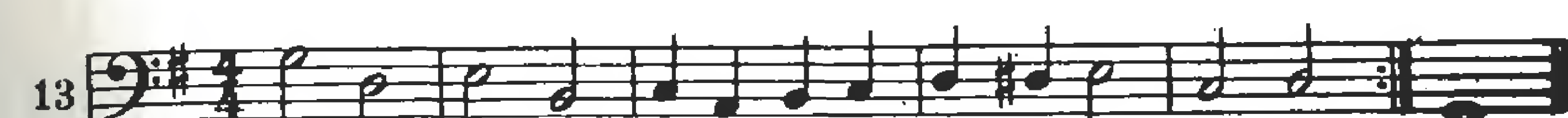
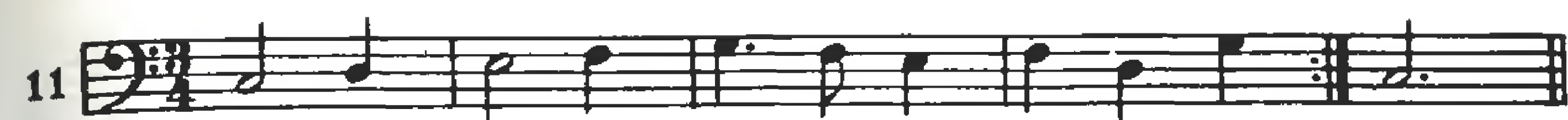
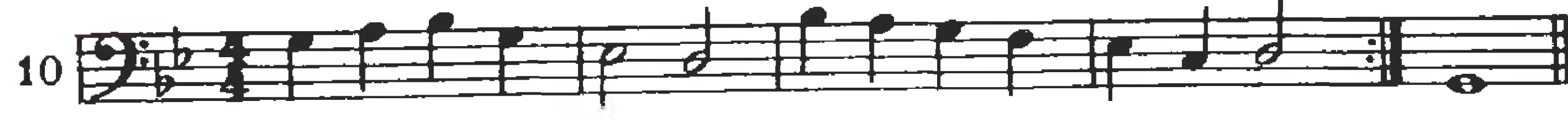
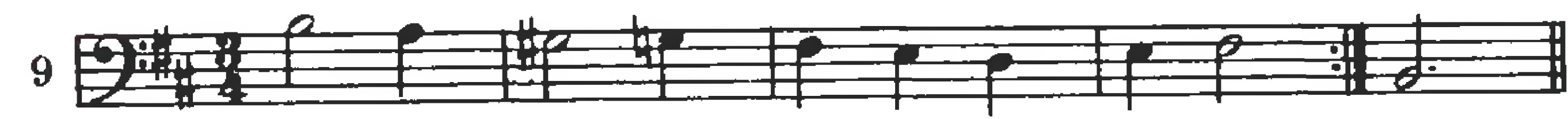
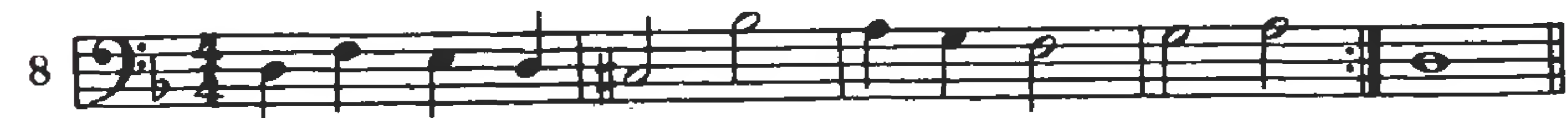
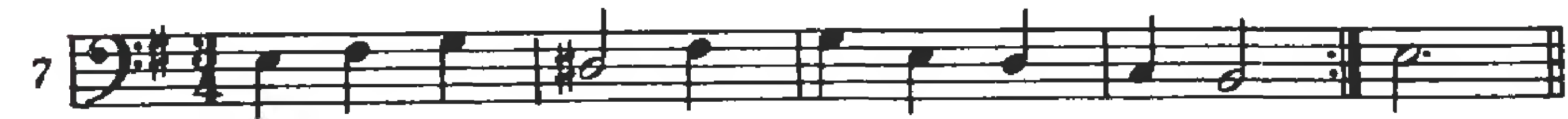
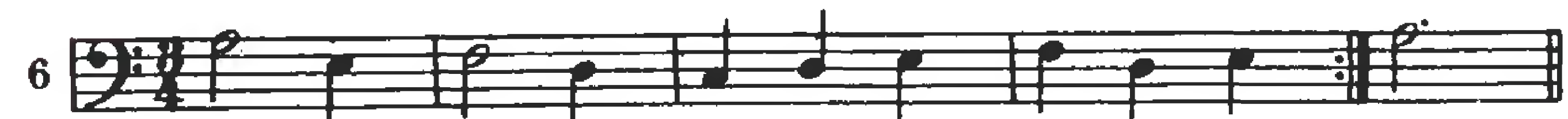
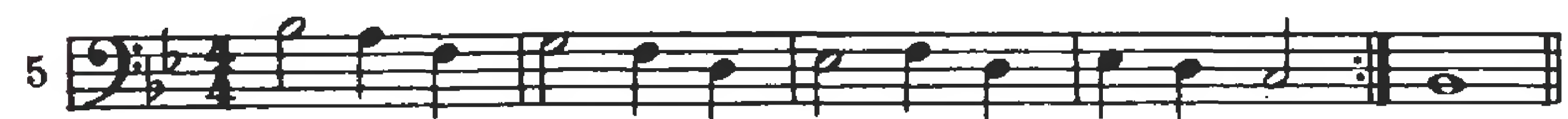
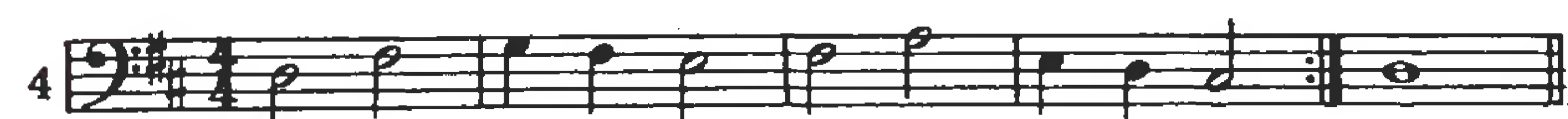
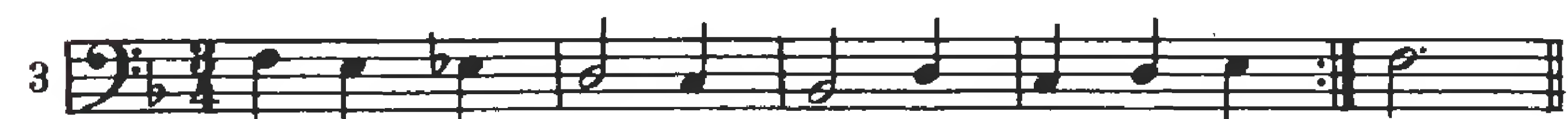
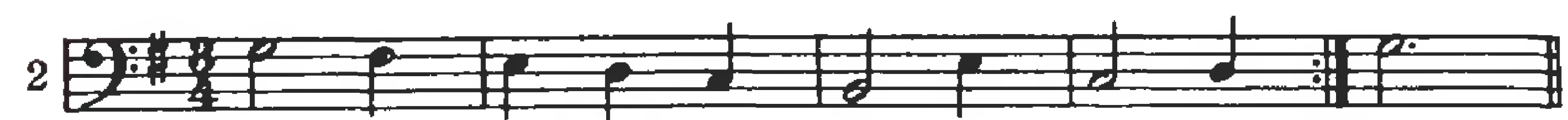
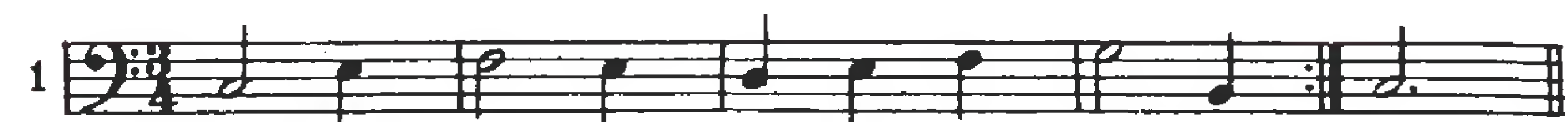
11. For the benefit of students who prefer to use the two part-work in the middle, here is an example:





# EXERCISES TO CHAPTER VIII

Ground Bases: Add one part for the opening, then two parts for the second and third statements of the bass. The two-part working may be used in the middle if desired. The final tonic may be extended for one or two bars.





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## CHAPTER IX

THE COMBINATION OF THREE  
FLORID PARTS

1. In combining three rhythmic melodies, there should not be quite so much movement in any one of them as may have been required in two parts. To give unity to the whole, short rhythmic figures or motives should be interspersed throughout the exercise. There is no new harmonic technique, and no new problem. If the C.F. is in the bass let the other two parts enter with some kind of free imitation. Imitation is to be desired in this kind of work, even if the given part is in one of the upper voices.

When the C.F. is given in an upper voice it is better to sketch in a harmonic bass first, then elaborate the added parts, using a short figure here and there to bind the parts together.

Here is a short example to show the kind of texture required, with imitation, modulation and some development of short figures:



## 2. Fugato passages.

This is really not the place for fugal writing. However, passages may be fugal in style without following the rather strict rules for fugal expositions. Fugal passages are found in sonatas without becoming fugues. The plan is this:

(a) A short theme or *subject* about four to six bars in length is selected for such treatment. First it is heard in solo form in any one of the three voices used for such passages. It is then moved into another voice in the dominant key. This second entry may conveniently be called the *answer*. Care should be taken that the move into the dominant key be made smoothly, even if a tiny codetta is inserted to do this.

(b) The answer, now being in the dominant is accompanied by a counterpoint which is a continuation of the subject previously heard. This added part is the countersubject. The two parts carry on together until the third entry of the theme, which is now in the tonic key again. A few notes at the end of the answer will allow the music to return to the tonic key without a halting effect.

(c) The third part is now added to complete the counterpoint as explained in the opening of this chapter. Chromatic chords are somewhat out of place in this type of writing. Good florid counterpoint with some figuration is all that is required.

Here are two fugato passages which conform to the above requirements:

The first example shows a subject in the bass staff (G major, 4/4) and an answer in the treble staff. The second example shows a subject in the treble staff and an answer in the bass staff. Both examples consist of two staves each, with the subject and answer entries clearly marked.

The first example shows a subject in the treble staff (G major, 4/4) and an answer in the bass staff. The second example shows a subject in the treble staff and an answer in the bass staff. Both examples consist of two staves each, with the subject and answer entries clearly marked.



# EXERCISES TO CHAPTER IX

A. Add two florid parts above the following basses:

1

2

3

4

5

B. Add two florid parts below each of these melodies:

1

2

3

4

5



C. Write Fugato passages on each of these subjects:

